Development in an Insecure and Gendered World

The Relevance of the Millennium Goals

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Chapter 8

Gender Security and Trade: The Millennium Development Goals in the Pacific

Terence Wood and Vijay Naidu

Introduction

Within the Pacific region, the increasingly short journey from the travel pages to the international section of any New Zealand newspaper feels like a voyage between two different parts of the world. The travel pages still reveal the Pacific of popular imagination: warm, welcoming and peaceful. The world pages, alternatively implode with a Pacific of much less cheerful images; corruption, poverty, ill health, instability and armed conflict. It seems implausible that these two Pacifics could exist in the same ocean, much less within the same newspaper. Part of the reason for this contrast is simply that the Pacific of popular imagination never really existed. Marketing campaigns and exclusive resorts insulated from the countries they are situated in have long kept issues of Pacific development out of the sight of tourists. Likewise, the media has, until relatively recently, tended to under report Pacific issues, while now it is arguably guilty of over–sensationalizing them. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the Pacific region is currently facing a series of challenges – some new, some the result of previously unaddressed issues coming to a head – that pose a major threat to the region's development and most importantly to its people.

Simultaneously as issues of Pacific development are coming to the fore, increasing emphasis has been placed on a major international development initiative, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These are a set of internationally agreed development targets that have become the major focus for international development efforts.

This chapter examines the state of Pacific development through the lens of the MDGs. It assesses progress towards meeting the MDGs and outlines the major obstacles to meeting the Goals and by inference, to development in the Pacific. It then considers potential solutions to the challenges confronting the region. Particular attention is paid to gender and conflict. Gender is not only a key area where the MDGs have been strongly critiqued but is also a key area where the Pacific region's outcomes are of concern. Conflict is also highlighted because this has considerable potential to derail the achievement of the MDGs.

The Millennium Development Goals and critics

The eight MDGs are divided into more specific targets and indicators. All of the targets have 1990 as a baseline year and most of the targets should be delivered by 2015. The indicators may be adjusted for particular countries and regions and are intended for use in monitoring progress towards each of the targets (Asian Development Bank 2003). The eight MDGs are shown in Table 1.1 and a complete list of the Goals, Targets and Indicators are on the official United Nations MDGs Indicators' page (United Nations Statistics Division n.d.). In January 2008 the United Nations updated the official list of MDG targets and indicators to reflect commitments made in the years after the original MDG list was drawn up. Most of the changes made in the update are relatively minor and because data for the Pacific is not yet fully collated for the new targets and indicators, this chapter is confined to discussing progress against the original set of targets and indicators.

While the first seven MDGs are measures of progress rather than policy prescriptions, the goals are not intended to be used simply as a development yardstick. Goal 8 outlines elements of a development partnership between the developed and developing worlds. Moreover, development agencies and governments are expected to design policies around the objective of achieving the Goals. The Goals are intended to serve as a form of 'soft law' or moral imperative against which nations can be held to account, particularly by their own people (Asian Development Bank 2004).

Although the MDGs have become a central figure of the development landscape, their worth is far from uncontroversial. Since their development, the Goals have been subjected to considerable critique. They have been decried both as under ambitious (Gold 2005), and as overly ambitious (Clemens, Radelet and Bhavnani 2004), although both these critiques appear to miss the point that the MDGs can be tailored to a country's specific circumstances.

More substantively, some critics of the MDGs have highlighted that these make no reference to indigenous and other minority groups within countries, or mandate the collection of separate statistics on these groups (Minority Rights Group International 2003). This omission is cause for considerable concern as in many developing and developed countries, various different minority groups have substantially worse human development outcomes than the national average (Minority Rights Group International 2003).

In addition, the MDGs (unlike the Millennium Declaration which they are based upon) make no specific reference to human rights (United Nations General Assembly 2000; Barton 2005; Gold 2005). This leads to the paradoxical situation where potentially a country that suppresses free speech, and detains and tortures dissidents can appear to have done more to improve human development, as measured by the Goals, than a neighbouring country that is democratic, and which respects human rights, but which has had a slightly lower reduction in poverty.

Some of the most trenchant critiques of the MDGs have come from those working with gender and development related issues. One area that elicited strong

critique was the initial exclusion in the Goals of any mention of women's sexual and reproductive rights. To Peggy Antrobus, from Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), the absence of direct reference in the original MDGs to women's sexual and reproductive rights was:

> ...inexcusable given that women's sexual and reproductive rights is not only a goal but a crucial target and/or indicator of progress under at least 3 Goals – Goal number 3 (women's equality and empowerment), Goal number 4 (child mortality), Goal number 5 (maternal health) and Goal number 6 (combating HIV/AIDS) (Antrobus 2003, 1).

Antrobus, and many other members of gender and development focused organizations, considered not only the exclusion vexing because it undermined the other Goals, but also because it represented retrogression from previous international agreements on gender such as the Beijing Platform for Action which had included references to these rights (Antrobus 2003; Barton 2005).

The campaign to include women's sexual and reproductive rights to be measured in the Goals began before the release of the original list of MDGs. By 2008 it appears that this campaign has been successful. At the 2005 UN world summit a commitment was made to recognizing the importance of sexual and reproductive rights. In 2006 Kofi Annan announced that a new MDG target of universal access to reproductive health would be included under MDG 5 (International Planned Parenthood Foundation n.d.). By 2008 the official online list of MDG Goals, Targets and Indicators was finally updated to reflect this commitment (United Nations Statistics Division n.d.).

Even with the inclusion of a target on sexual and reproductive health, there are still significant shortcomings in how the MDGs treat issues of gender. While MDG 3 relates specifically to gender, many critics of the Goals have noted that the indicators associated with this Goal provide a very limited snapshot of the state of gender relations within societies (Antrobus 2003; Barton 2005). The Indicators associated with Goal 3 are:

- Indicator 9 – the ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary, and tertiary education,
- Indicator 10 – the ratio of literate females to males in 15–24 year olds,
- Indicator 11 – the share of women in wage employment in the non agricultural sector,
- Indicator 12 – the proportion of seats held by women in the national parliament.[1]

1 The 2008 update of the MDG indicators has a new numbering system. Indicator 9 becomes Indicator 3.1, Indicator 10 is included under Indicator 2.3, Indicator 11 becomes indicator 3.2, and Indicator 12 becomes Indicator 3.3.

To these critics, Indicator 9 says nothing about the quality of education, while Indicator 11 gives equal value to a woman working in a sweatshop as to a female heading a major organization. Critics also identify missing indicators measuring violence against women, female infanticide and other social characteristics that indicate much about the status of women (Barton 2005).

Are the MDGs worth engaging with?

The limitations of the MDGs, most apparent in how they treat issues of gender and development, provide a potential reason for disregarding the Goals altogether. Instead three key reasons as to why the MDGs must be addressed are presented here. First, as the experience of campaigns to have women's sexual and reproductive rights included in the Goals has shown, those who are willing to engage with the MDGs may potentially succeed in improving the measures. Secondly, while the MDGs have limitations, they are an improvement on the reductionist approaches to quantifying development (in which development was often equated only with economic growth) that were prevalent in the 1980s and 1990s. The MDGs are not a perfect set of measures for progress in human development but they are a starting point for a more holistic take on development progress. Thirdly, the MDGs have become a central focus in the rhetoric and practice of most multilateral and national development agencies. This means that those who wish to engage with these agencies also need to engage with the MDGs. We consider that the best approach to the MDGs is one of careful engagement. In places where the Goals are not being met, it can be assumed that human development quantified in broader terms is also not taking place. The countries that are meeting the Goals indicate ground for optimism although further investigations are necessary to ensure that human rights are not being violated and that the needs of women and minorities are being met as part of overall progress.

Progress in the Pacific

This discussion of the Pacific Island Countries' (PICs)[2] progress towards meeting the MDGs begins with two caveats. The first is that measurement of the Goals is fraught with issues, particularly where aspects of the measures need to be estimated or derived from other observations (Vandemoortele 2004). The second is that for many PICs there is insufficient time–series data to accurately discuss MDG progress (Secretariat of the Pacific Community 2004). Despite this caution, Figure 8.1 reports the PICs' progress with the MDGs.

2 Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji Islands, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu (Timor–Leste is sometimes also grouped as part of the Pacific).

- Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands lag behind other PICS in almost all areas where there is data.
- Several other PICs such as Kiribati, Tuvalu and Vanuatu exhibit worrying trends or poor absolute performance in many but not all indicators.
- Cook Islands, Tonga and Samoa are the best overall MDG performers. In these states performance is strong across a majority of the MDG Indicators.
- In the education–related indicators many of the PICs are performing very well by developing country standards. However, these measures may be misleading as they report on enrolment rates and years of schooling but offer no information about the quality of education received.
- Most PICs have good absolute performance levels in education and reducing child and maternal mortality. Some PICs have recently shown a downward trend. This should be cause for concern even if absolute performance remains high.
- Although data is insufficient to accurately quantify the trend, the general perception is that poverty is worsening around the Pacific region. Poverty statistics indicate that this is a significant issue for the region (Abbott and Pollard 2004).
- HIV/AIDS (covered under MDG 6) is a major issue in Papua New Guinea, but not yet for the rest of the Pacific. Evidence suggests that this may change in the future.
- Malaria remains a long–standing scourge in Papua New Guinea (10 – 50 per 1000), Vanuatu (10 – 50 per 1000) and Solomon Islands (100 – 200 per 1000) and tuberculosis is on the rise in many PICs.

Figure 8.1 Pacific Islands Countries' progress with the Millennium Development Goals by 2004

Source: Unless indicated, Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) data (2004).

Progress in gender related indicators

At a cursory glance there appears to be something paradoxical about the PICs' progress on the MDG indicators related to gender: in two of the indicators (Indicators 9 and 10) the PICs perform well; in another (Indicator 11), their

performance is relatively poor; and in the fourth (Indicator 12) the Pacific's results are egregious.

MDG Indicator 9 is based on the ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education. In primary education no PIC has a boy to girl enrolment ratio of less than 0.8 and the majority have an enrolment ratio of 0.9–1.0 with Nauru having more girls than boys enrolled in primary school (SPC 2004, 47). Similarly, at a secondary level only Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea have ratios of less than 0.8, while six PICs have ratios of greater than 1.0 (more girls than boys enrolled) (SPC 2004, 47). At a tertiary level, ten of the PICs have a ratio of one or better (in Niue the ratio is higher than 3 to 1) (SPC 2004, 47).[3] There are still some PICs that stand apart from the positive results, most notably Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea, but in general, the Pacific is doing much better than many developing regions in achieving gender parity in education. Data for Indicator 10 (literacy ratios) needs to be treated with caution as in many PICs literacy rates are inferred only from primary school enrolment rates. If the quality of schooling is poor, the relationship between primary school enrolment and literacy may be tenuous. Data suggests that many PICs have as many literate women as men (SPC 2004, 51).

MDG Indicator 11 is less positive as data indicates that the share of women in wage employment is near static or even decreasing in nearly half of the PICs for which there is available information. Moreover, Indicator 11 is a highly inadequate measure of gender parity in employment as it equates a woman employed in a sweatshop with a corporate manager (Barton 2005). Other data indicates considerable inequality and discrimination against women within the paid workforce of most PICs (SPC 2004; Narsey 2007).

MDG Indicator 12 provides further cause for concern. The SPC's 2004 report uses 2000 (or closest available year) data in its table for this indicator. This shows three PICs as having no female members of parliament, while in only two; over 10 per cent of MPs were women. In 2000 Fiji was the PIC with the highest level of female parliamentary representation, with 15.5 per cent of parliamentary seats held by women. Later coups have seen this number drop, as gender equality has suffered from political insecurity. Overall, the Pacific's results for Indicator 12 have fluctuated between being the worst (during 1990, 2008) and second worst (in 2004) of any global region (United Nations 2008, 19).

The apparent paradox between the PICs strong performance in Indicators 9 and 10 and their considerably poorer results in Indicators 11 and 12 is illustrative of the limitations of MDG gender indicators. While education is empowering and a critical capability, much lies between having an educated female population and social conditions where women have equal voice in how they live their lives and societies are shaped. A broader set of MDG indicators could offer a more detailed picture of gender relations in the PICs, showing whether the impact of education

3 Some care needs to be taken with tertiary rates as many are based on incomplete data or on estimates.

was 'trickling up' through society and where obstacles to progress might lie. Further examination of the status of women in the PICs, beyond that measured in the original set of gender related MDG indicators, suggests that there is cause for concern in the region. Domestic violence rates are high (SPC 2004) while other goals such as universal access to sexual and reproductive health services are unlikely to be met in the near future (House 2000).

Nevertheless, the state of Pacific gender relations are not entirely bleak. The majority of PICs have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and all have endorsed the Pacific Plan for Action, which calls for Pacific–wide recognition of CEDAW (SPC 2004). Some progress has been made in legislation around gender issues as indicated in a review of Pacific progress in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action (Young Women's Christian Association 1999). House (2000, 63) details this:

> ...many governments seem to have made changes to national legislation or policies in order to improve the status of women and the pace of change has accelerated since 1995. New legislation or national policies have entailed changes in family law and implementation of procedures to punish gender violence, as well as policies to raise girls' and women's access to education and training.

These legislative changes must be continued, consolidated, enforced and extended across the region. Legislative progress needs to be reflected in tangible changes in the attitudes and actions of decision makers and men in general.

The challenges ahead

The mixed progress of the PICs in meeting the MDGs is cause for concern but the region is still confronted by several challenges, which if not surmounted will further reduce chances of meeting the Goals and sustaining broad–based human development.[4]

Non communicable diseases and HIV/AIDS

A key challenge to Pacific MDG progress is that of the rising incidence of Non Communicable Diseases (NCDs) and HIV/AIDS. NCDs are not specifically mentioned in the MDGs, yet for many PICs, particularly within the more affluent ones, they pose a major challenge. Nauru already has the world's highest incidence

4 Climate change is a significant challenge not addressed here. This is primarily because this is a global issue – requiring global solutions – as opposed to the other specific issues concerning the region. The issue of climate change stands as a huge challenge to human development in the Pacific. If no action is taken to remedy the problem, then the outlook for human development in the Pacific will be bleak.

of diabetes mellitus per capita (International Diabetes Foundation 2003, 1) and several other PICs also have very high incidences of not only diabetes but also heart disease. More troubling is that the available evidence on NCD risk factors suggests that NCDs may become more prevalent across the region in the future (SPC 2004). The threat posed by NCDs is two–fold. These diseases have a direct impact through substantially increased morbidity and mortality. The treatment of NCDs threatens human development and attaining the MDGs through diverting government resources from other areas. Treatment costs for NCDs account for 11 per cent of the Fiji government's health spending, 18 per cent of the total in Tonga, and 27 per cent in Samoa (SPC 2004, 79). Unless the trends in NCDs are reversed, costs are likely to increase in the Pacific in the future (Khaleghian 2003).

HIV/AIDS prevalence across the Pacific region remains significantly lower than the prevalence of NCDs yet the illness has as a potential to derail development progress in the region. Papua New Guinea is currently the only Pacific Island country experiencing a generalized HIV/AIDS epidemic but the rapid spread, and impact, of the disease provides a sobering warning for the rest of the region. In 1987, there were only six reported cases of HIV/AIDS infection in Papua New Guinea; by the end of 2003 an estimated 0.6 per cent and possibly as many as one per cent of Papua New Guinea's population were estimated to be HIV/AIDS positive (Centre for International Economics 2002, 81; UNAIDS 2004, 1). Not only has the illness spread rapidly in Papua New Guinea but direct implications such as loss of life and incapacitation), as well as indirect effects on economic and health resources are significant (Centre for International Economics 2002). The situation in Papua New Guinea may become significantly worse, with the epidemic potentially becoming as severe as that in some Sub–Saharan African countries. An epidemic of this extent has major development implications beyond the immediate impact of the illness (UNAIDS n.d.). Economies may stagnate, and social structures may unravel (UNAIDS n.d.).

Unless action is taken, many other PICs may have to address rising HIV/AIDS levels. There are several reasons for believing that such a spread is a real risk. First, current statistics measuring HIV/AIDS incidence in the Pacific underestimate the prevalence of the disease. This is because many PICs do not currently have adequate HIV/AIDS testing programmes and also because the stigma associated with HIV/AIDS discourages people from being tested for the illness (AIDS New Zealand 2005). Second, at present, across much of the Pacific there are high incidences of teenage pregnancies and incidence of sexually transmitted infections. The World Bank has recently estimated that Papua New Guinea 'generates over one million new cases of curable sexually transmitted infections (STIs) every year' (*Fiji Times*, 20 March 2008, 17). This is significant not only because pregnancies and the incidence of sexually transmitted infections is indicative of unsafe sex practices, but also because existing sexually transmitted infections can facilitate the transmission of HIV/AIDS (AIDS New Zealand 2005; UNAIDS 2004). Finally, the incidence of religious beliefs and other cultural practices in many PICs make the discussion of sexual matters taboo. Such taboos impede safe sex and other illness awareness programmes that will be required to stop HIV/AIDS from spreading (AIDS New Zealand 2005; UNICEF, UNESCAP and ECPAT 2006).

The rise of HIV/AIDS in the Pacific has consequences for the region's women. Virus transfer mechanisms mean that women are much more likely to contract HIV/AIDS through heterosexual sex than men. Gender norms, as well as economic factors (in particular, men travelling for work as well as some of them having large disposable incomes) may lead to men having multiple sexual partners, thus increasing the risks of disease contraction for these women. Within relationships, gender power imbalances may mean that women are unable to request their partners to use condoms. Women are also often required to take on a disproportionate burden of care giving roles when a family member contracts HIV/AIDS (WHO n.d.).

Similarly, HIV/AIDS and conflict are interrelated. Due to its forced nature, sexual violence associated with conflict is more likely to lead to HIV/AIDS infection than consensual sex (WHO n.d.). Conflict situations can also prevent HIV/AIDS positive people from receiving the treatment they need. The likelihood of the spread of HIV/AIDS through the Pacific and the destructive impacts of the disease lead us to conclude that it represents a major development challenge to the region.

The imposition of inappropriate economic policies

In its geography, culture, institutional structures and history, the Pacific is like no other region on earth. Not only is it unique, but also the region is diverse, with much variation between countries. It would seem apparent that a pragmatic, contextually specific approach to economic policy would be the most fruitful means to fostering economic development in the region. However, the past two decades have seen the opposite occur: neoliberalism, an economic ideology with a questionable record elsewhere in the developing world (Stiglitz 2002; Hardstaff 2005) has been applied in a cookie–cutter fashion across the Pacific, usually at the behest of donor agencies, multilateral organizations, and foreign governments (ACFOA 2002; Coates and Lennon 2005; Kelsey 2004; Lennon 2005; Slatter 2006; Storey and Murray 2001).

Neoliberalism is typically associated with a laissez–faire approach to both domestic and international economics. In most PICs this has meant a shrinking of the state, where applied on the domestic front. This is not invariably negative: overly restrictive legislative regimes can stifle business development while oversized inefficient bureaucracies can drain money that could be best spent elsewhere. However, neoliberalism in the Pacific has not simply been restricted to these types of changes. Instead, its advocates have pushed for across the board policy change. In the Cook Islands, for example, neoliberal reforms led the education budget being almost halved in the mid–1990s while the budget for housing and community services was reduced from $9 million to $1 million over the same period (ACFOA 2002, 11). In Tonga, neoliberal reforms led to increased prices for services such as

electricity (ACFOA 2002). In Vanuatu neoliberal reforms precipitated increased urban unemployment (Lennon 2005), while in Fiji reforms raised costs for basic services such as water and the introduction of Value Added Tax (VAT), leading to a rise in the cost of foodstuffs (ACFOA 2002; Barr 2004). The 1990s, when most of the reforms were introduced in Fiji, were a period of increased income poverty (Abbott and Pollard 2004), partly attributable to neoliberal economic policies (Naidu 2002). The social costs of such reforms are extremely unlikely to aid the MDGs being met.

The neoliberal prescription for the domestic economies' interface with the international economy is trade liberalization: lowering tariffs, reducing other barriers and increasing international trade. Although the goal of increased international trade is broadly laudable, the neoliberal approach to international economics is as counter–productive to human development as its approach to domestic economics. Much of the problem is that neoliberalism tends to equate increased trade with simply reducing formal barriers while paying no attention to less visible impediments along with countries' capacity to trade. Yet capacity is crucial and, importantly, the creation of such capacity does not appear to simply follow reduced trade barriers (Rodrik 2001). Most of today's developed countries achieved this status through various means, such as tilting the economic playing field in favour of their own domestic industries (Chang 2002). Requirements that the PICs abandon such tools indicate that advocates of neoliberalism will significantly impede PICs' development opportunities.

Neoliberalism also elevates increased trade from being a development strategy to be pursued, among others, to being the development strategy to be pursued at all costs. In the Pacific these costs are significant. For example, trade liberalization entails the removal of tariffs; yet in many PICs, tariffs are a major source of government income. In 2001, they comprised as much as 64 per cent of state revenue in Kiribati (Scollay 2001, 11). The International Monetary Fund (IMF) forecasted that with the adoption of the regional free trade agreements, countries like Fiji are likely to lose over US$100 million each year (*Fiji Times*, 21 March 2008, 16). Given this, it is highly likely that large scale tariff reduction will entail either reduced state spending (often social spending) or the raising of revenue from alternative sources by PIC governments, In the case of reduced government spending, when it comes from social services the consequences of this for meeting the MDGs are clear. However, the raising of revenue from alternative sources is also problematic, primarily because alternative revenue is typically raised via indirect taxation (such as VATs) with the flow on effect of increased costs for basic foodstuffs, that harms the poor[5] (Barr 2004; Coates and Lennon 2005).

5 Theoretically, price rises associated with VATs should offset price reductions resulting from tariff reductions; however, in the case of Vanuatu, this did not happen (Lennon 2005). Moreover, in many PICs staple produce is often grown locally (and thus not impacted on by tariffs) while it is 'luxury goods' (of little relevance to the poor) which are imported.

Another cost associated with trade liberalization is the destruction of existing industries with increased competition. Typically such 'creative destruction' is not seen as a problem by advocates of neoliberalism who argue that industries destroyed in the short term will be replaced in the medium to long term by newer, more efficient businesses. However, in the Pacific context of very small economies, such restructuring may not occur or restructuring may have considerable adverse effects on human development (Coates and Lennon 2005; Firth 2005).

Neoliberalism and the economic change it brings also have gendered consequences. The destruction of traditional sources of income can lead to men travelling long distances from their homes for work, and marginalize women from traditional productive activities in small scale production for household consumption and for the domestic market. Equally employment opportunities, in both export production sectors such as the garments and fish cannery industries and the service industries may favour female employment (e.g., Emberson–Bain 1994; Harrington 2004). Urbanization may also induce the disruption of traditional social networks that can lead to an increased burden of domestic work for women. The reduced government spending on health and education described above may also be borne most heavily by women (Willis 2005).

The rising tide of neoliberalism has stemmed somewhat since its peak in the 1990s yet it has not yet reversed in the region and there remains considerable pressure from the regional powers and some donors on the PICs to adopt neoliberal policy, particularly with respect to trade liberalization (Kelsey 2004; Oxfam New Zealand 2005). Until this is reversed and a more practical context–specific approach to economics adopted across the region, neoliberalism will remain a hurdle to the meeting of the MDGs.

Regional powers, power imbalances and inappropriate engagement

The promotion of neoliberalism is not the only area where the regional powers are having an impact on the Pacific. Indeed, given the vast disparity in size and political clout between the PICs and countries such as New Zealand, Australia, Japan, China, Taiwan, France and the United States, it is unsurprising that these countries continue to have a major influence on patterns of development in the Pacific. The European Union (EU) has also become a significant player as the partner of ACP countries in the region. Such influence is not always negative. Well given aid, for example, can enhance the PICs' development as can well planned peacekeeping missions. Yet too much of the engagement that these larger powers have with the Pacific is guided by self interest. Because of the power imbalance involved, self interested actions on behalf of the larger regional players have the potential to significantly impede Pacific development.

One example of the problematic interaction between the regional powers and the PICs is the vying for influence between China and Taiwan for political representation, through embassies and access to Pacific resources (Perlez 2006; Shie 2006). This striving for embassies and influence has led to large 'no strings

attached' aid packages being offered to some PICs (Perlez 2006; Shie 2006). Such aid is not invariably bad but it is potentially counterproductive as it is given with little conditions or concern for how it is used. This increases the potential for corruption and can even have a destabilizing influence as the Chinese and Taiwanese governments exert pressure on PIC governments and political parties (Moore 2008). The race for resources is also not necessarily destructive – expanding markets for Pacific goods ought to aid development. Unfortunately, at present much of the economic activity is extractive, centred around natural resources, and unsustainable.[6] The long term impact on human development is likely to be more harmful than beneficial (Moore 2008).

There are numerous other examples (such as past nuclear testing by France and the US, and 'arm twisting' on WTO accession committees) where regional powers act with little regard to the interests of the PICs. There seems little evidence of this abating. For this reason and because of the sheer scale of the power imbalance between the regional powers and the PICs the actions of the regional powers will continue, in many instances, to be a challenge to meeting the MDGs in the region.

Governance

Issues of power and development are not limited to interactions between states: political power and its use and abuse within states also has the potential to dramatically influence development outcomes. Issues such as corruption and weak institutions can significantly impede not only economic development (Acemoglu 2003) but also social, environmental and other components of the development process (Eigen–Zucchi, Eskeland and Shalizi 2003). The development community is aware of this and internationally governance has become central to development discourse. The Pacific has embraced this trend especially with recent examples of bad governance in the region (see for example, Moore 2004; Naidu 2002).

The importance of improving governance in the PICs is now being taken seriously by many of the regional development actors. However, taking action and successful outcomes are not the same, and it is our view that the good governance agenda has problems. Too often, it tends to be reductionist and poorly suited to the complex reality of the Pacific (see for example, Hughes 2003). In particular, it appears blind to the need for successful institutions to be context–specific. Models that have succeeded elsewhere may be prone to failure in the PICs. Moreover, there is a strong tendency to view good governance as solely an internal issue for the PICs. Yet corruption in developing nations is partly the result of external forces,

6 Chinese and Taiwanese firms are not the only ones engaging in environmentally damaging extractive industries. Korean and Malaysian firms have also been involved in several countries.

> ...corruption has two sides – demand and supply. For every leader who demands a bribe, there is usually a multinational company or a Western official offering to pay it. For every pile of illicit wealth, there is usually a European or American financial institution providing a safe haven for the spoils (Birdsall, Rodrik and Subramanian 2005, 148),

In the Pacific, recent history is rife with examples of business and other interests from outside the region acting to undermine governance (Firth 2005; Kabutaulaka 1998; Kahn 2000; Larmour 1998; Moore 2004; Naidu 2003). If the regional powers are serious about improved governance in the Pacific then they will also need to tackle those problems that stem from within their own borders. At present, this side of governance is mostly neglected.

Such shortcomings associated with the 'Good Governance in the Pacific' agenda lead us to be much more pessimistic about the potential for improved governance in the region. Despite the attention that is being paid to the problem, the obstacle of governance in many PICs seems set to remain as an obstacle to currently meeting the MDGs.

Conflict

The risk of significant conflict does not exist in all PICs, but where there is conflict or the potential for conflict, the issue is of central concern. Significant conflict is certain to derail sustained human development and progress in meeting the MDGs in the countries where it occurs.

The most direct development impact of conflict is simply the loss of life and harm associated with the violence itself. As the examples of the Bougainville conflict and Solomon Islands (Alexander 2006; Amnesty International 2004; Finnin and Wesley–Smith 2000) show, such impacts can be tragic and a significant impediment to human development. However, in the Pacific, as elsewhere, the indirect impacts of conflict on development spread far further than the actual fighting. Damage associated with rioting and fighting is often significant, as in the case of riots in Solomon Islands and Tonga during 2006, and the impact of this on businesses as providers of both employment and goods. In addition to destruction of physical capital, conflict, particularly where it has an ethnic dimension, can lead to human capital depletion associated with emigration. In Fiji and elsewhere, conflict has contributed to overall economic malaise (Naidu 2005). Conflict's indirect impact on human development also extends beyond the economic sphere by impacting on government functioning and the government's ability to provide social services. Conflict in Bougainville led to political resignations and significantly diminished government revenues (O'Callaghan 2002), while the conflict in Solomon Islands led to near complete government collapse (Moore 2004). As indicated in Solomon Islands, conflict can be particularly harmful to the wellbeing of women, with sexual violence against women rising dramatically during the period of fighting (Amnesty International 2004).

While conflict is often a cause of failure in human development, it is important to note that stalled human development is also often a contributing factor to conflict. High unemployment, for example, is both a common symptom of stalled development and a significant contributing factor to conflict (Sardesai and Wam 2002). In Solomon Islands recent research suggests that high male unemployment has been a key contributing factor to ongoing tension (Romer and Renzaho 2007). The same study also found that corruption was also perceived to be a key contributing factor to conflict.

Domestic issues are not the only potential source of conflict within the region. In many cases the actions of outside interests have served as catalysts for outbreaks of violence. With the Bougainville conflict (see Chapter 6), the Australian run Panguna mine was a major contributing factor in the outbreak of violence (O'Callaghan 2002). Similarly, there is evidence that external business interests may have played a role in sparking the Fijian coup of 2000 (Naidu 2003). The corruption of some sectors of the Chinese business community appears to have been one of the contributing factors in recent riots in Solomon Islands (Moore 2008). Misguided development strategies can serve as catalysts to conflict. In the wake of the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis, International Monetary Fund (IMF) imposed structural adjustment programmes led to conflict and unrest in several Asian countries as well as in Argentina (Stiglitz 2002). Public sector reform in Solomon Islands coincided with tensions and the outbreak of open conflict in 2000.

We stress that conflict is a critical issue for the affected PICs. Unless further conflict can be prevented it is extremely unlikely that the MDGs will be met in these countries. The nexus of conflict's causes and effects is revisited in the next section.

Future pathways: Overcoming challenges meeting the MDGs

Although we have noted the Pacific's patchy progress in meeting the MDGs and detailed the major challenges we see confronting the region, we advise against pessimism. Pacific people have faced and adapted to challenges throughout their history and we are confident that they will do so again. None of the challenges facing the region are insurmountable and there are several key actions that could be taken to greatly enhance the chance of the MDGs being met and sustained human development occurring.

International engagement guided by enlightened self interest

As noted above, the scale of differences in political power between most of the PICs and the regional powers means that relatively minor decisions made by the regional powers can have significant repercussions in the PICs. However there is a positive flipside to this argument. The 'costs' for the regional powers of pursuing

policies in the region that are guided more by enlightened self interest rather than self interest alone are typically small.

There are four major areas where a more enlightened approach from the regional powers to engagement with the PICs should significantly enhance regional development prospects. Two of these, aid and peace building, are dealt with separately. The other two – trade policy and monitoring of business interests – are covered here.

The need for a different approach to trade policy requires particular attention from the Australian and New Zealand governments and the EU. In recent years the governments of these nations as well as EU trade negotiators (sometimes accompanied by multilateral agencies) have pressured the PICs to reduce tariff and other formal barriers to international trade. Pressure has been exerted through the creation of the Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement (PICTA) and Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER) trade blocks (Kelsey 2004; Chapter 9), the signing of Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) with the EU, and also through the World Trade Organization (WTO) Accession processes that several PICs are undertaking or have undertaken (Oxfam New Zealand 2005). Presumably motivated both by misplaced ideology and potential benefits to domestic interests, the drive for trade liberalization in the Pacific has mostly been pursued with little concern for context and the potential adverse impacts of wholesale liberalization. As detailed above, such impacts are potentially major. This has been pointed out to trade officials, not only by civil society organizations and academics, but also by PIC governments, yet it continues to be ignored. Indeed, the demands placed on Tonga during its recent WTO accession were some of the most severe of any accession (Oxfam New Zealand 2005),[7] while recent EU EPAs were particularly aggressive in their demands. Simultaneously, with the small size of most PIC markets, the benefits to the EU, Australia and New Zealand of pursuing such liberalization are not huge but neither are the costs of relaxing their position. If they were willing to take a more pragmatic approach to regional trade, these powers would be more likely to increase the PICs' possibilities of achieving the MDGs.

In addition to the EU, Australia and New Zealand changing their approach to trade liberalization and trade agreements in the region, almost all of the regional powers could contribute to enhancing the PICs' chances of meeting the MDGs through the simple act of scrutinizing their own business interests. As noted, business interests based in the various regional powers have contributed to conflict in Bougainville, Solomon Islands and possibly Fiji, as well as corruption and poor governance in almost all PICs. Accordingly, a concerted effort by the regional powers to tackle unsavoury business practices by their nationals should aid governance and reduce the risk of issues such as conflict and, in turn, increase the chances of the MDGs being met.

7 After a process spanning more than ten years Tonga became a formal member of the WTO in 2007.

More and better Official Development Assistance

The potential for Official Development Assistance (ODA) to aid in meeting the MDGs in the Pacific is clear. ODA can pay for provision of health care and education, fund increased capacity in government ministries, facilitate the flourishing of civil society and assist pro–poor economic development. However, in the absence of ODA, it is hard to see how PICs will be able to afford the social services necessary for meeting many of the targets let alone tackle challenges such as the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

ODA will only assist the PICs in meeting the MDGs if it works. Indeed, the argument that aid does not work is commonly heard from opponents of aid giving (for example, Hughes 2003). Typically, opponents of ODA cite one of two types of evidence as example of its supposed ineffectiveness: cross country econometric regressions that 'show' a negative or insignificant relationship between ODA levels and economic growth (for example Hughes 2003) or examples of failed aid projects which are given as evidence that all aid fails. Such 'evidence' can appear convincing at first. Further investigation reveals a significantly more complex picture. Although some econometric studies provide evidence that ODA has an insignificant impact on development (see for example Easterly, Levine and Roodman 2004), many other studies find a positive relationship (Clemens, Radelet and Bhavnani 2004; McGillivray, Feeny, Hermes and Lensink 2005). Moreover, cross country regressions, blunt instruments at best, suffer from constraints, which limit their usefulness in evaluating aid effectiveness. For example, most studies quantify results in terms of economic growth, yet this is far from the only reason for which ODA is given. Entirely desirable aid project outcomes may never show up in growth statistics or only many years after the aid has been given (for instance, projects to improve health, projects to improve gender relations in a society, projects to strengthen civil society). One recent study which attempted to overcome this limitation by regressing ODA against a wider variety of human development indicators (Fielding, McGillivray and Torres 2005) found positive correlations between increased aid levels and improved outcomes in areas such as sanitation, child health and basic household assets.

A further problem with cross country regressions investigating aid effectiveness is that most regression analyses make no attempt to distinguish well given ODA from that which is given poorly. A recent attempt at tackling such limitations found a clear positive result between ODA and economic growth (Reddy and Minoiu 2006). There is some doubt over the robustness of this finding (Raghuram and Subramanian 2008), and the analysis still uses blunt tools for determining good from bad ODA, but it appears suggestive of a broader point: well given ODA can work.

This is certainly the conclusion that is most apparent from an unbiased assessment of the results of individual aid projects. While ODA's critics often point to the failures of particular projects as being evidence of ODA always failing, there are also numerous examples of ODA programmes that have succeeded. Birdsall

Rodrik and Subramanian (2005, 142), while mindful of the limitations of ODA, provide a useful list of some of its successes:

> Aid has accomplished some great things. On the health front, smallpox has been eradicated, infant mortality rates have been lowered, and illnesses such as diarrhoea and river blindness have been widely treated. Aid programs have improved women's access to modern contraception in Bangladesh and Egypt and helped increase school enrollment in Uganda and Burkina Faso. Aid also pays for much of the (still–limited) access to AIDS medicines in poor countries. In the last decade, aid has helped restore peace and order after conflicts in places including Bosnia, East Timor, and Sierra Leone.

If ODA is critical to the MDGs being met in the PICs and ODA is most effective when it is given well, the next question must be what constitutes good aid? We emphasize four salient points.

The first is that good ODA needs to be genuinely given. Many of the worst aid failures stem from the cold war era when money was given to despots, regardless of how they spent it, simply to keep them 'on our side'. Similarly, ODA which is tied to purchases in the donor country (given as a form of domestic business subsidy) is less likely to be effective than ODA accompanied by the freedom to purchase appropriately (Greenhill and Watt 2005). The second key element of good ODA is that it needs to be given free of harmful conditionalities which tie it to inappropriate economic reforms (Greenhill and Watt 2005; Stiglitz 2002). Thirdly, ODA should be given in a manner that pays concern to intersecting issues and in particular, gender. From power to poverty, gender issues cut across development and development projects (Willis 2005), and if insufficient attention is paid to gender, ODA will fail to live up to its promise and may leave women worse off. The fourth key element of effective ODA involves giving aid as an honest and open learning process. While we have some ideas as to what constitutes good ODA, not all of the contributing factors to successful ODA are clear. The monitoring and evaluation processes that have become omnipresent in recent ODA programmes should provide some of the required information, yet these are often limited. Existing monitoring evaluation needs to be complemented with systematic investigations of aid effectiveness, which examine not only individual projects and programmes but also the combined influence of aid undertakings on regions and countries. If these four key elements are adopted – and some progress is being made on these – then ODA could fulfil its potential in assisting the realization of the MDGs.

Strengthening progressive civil society

The role of civil society in fostering better governance and through this, improved development is increasingly recognized in development circles (Edwards 2004; McNeil and Mumvuma 2006; Siri 2000). The UN Millennium Project explains the importance of civil society to human development:

> Strong civil society engagement and participation are crucial to effective governance because they bring important actors to the fore, ensure the relevance of public investments, lead to discussions that best address the people's needs as they perceive them and serve as watchdogs for the development and implementation of government policies (UN Millennium Project 2005, 32).

In addition to the rationale listed by the UN Millennium Project, civil society is important because it gives citizens the ability to speak with a collective voice, and it can act as a 'countervailing force' to the manipulation of the democratic process by vested interests.

Civil society is not a homogenous sector, uniformly dedicated to improving human development (Edwards 2004). Within the Pacific, some civil society organizations have played strongly counterproductive roles (such as when some church groups have hindered sexual and reproductive health). Yet throughout the Pacific there are increasing numbers of new civil society organizations arising, which do have a strong human development agenda (Naidu 2002; Tate 2005).

These 'new' civil society organizations, along with the more progressive elements of traditional civil society groups, have the potential to become a strong force working in favour of the MDGs in the Pacific. However, many of these organizations suffer from capacity and resource constraints. Overcoming these constraints will be a long term process. Meanwhile, one important contribution that external actors can make towards MDG progress in the region is funding, via ODA and private aid, civil society organizations. The fostering of the development of civil society organizations, that can hold governments to account, means that aid can become a tool for promoting good governance and healthy democracy (Greenhill and Watt 2005).

While civil society can facilitate improved governance, the relationship between civil society organizations and governments is not all one way. Governments can do much to aid the development of civil society but can also simultaneously stifle it (Edwards 2004). For this reason it is critical that the governments of the PICs allow space for civil society to develop. It is also critical that, when this space is not provided other regional actors (including governments, international Non Governmental Organizations and development agencies) engage in constructive action to stop such repression.

Peace building in the Pacific

Conflict, as noted, poses a major development challenge to the affected PICs. The challenge of conflict is compounded because it is much harder to stop than prevent. Conflict prevention should be a primary concern of the region's development actors.

There are several mechanisms through which such concern could be translated into tangible action. One area of improvement, already touched on, would be the region's powers making sure that their business interests are not sowing the seeds

of conflict through corrupt and destructive practices. If they are serious about preventing conflict in the Pacific, the regional powers will need to further clamp down on such practices.

In addition to monitoring the actions of their business interests, the regional powers need to pay careful attention to domestic policies, such as criminal repatriation, that may serve to spark unrest within the PICs. Donor agencies and multilaterals should also consider the value of preempting conflict when designing development strategies. Public sector employment creation schemes may be problematic and not mesh well with economic orthodoxy, but when considering the large concentrations of unemployed young men in conflicts around the region (Romer and Renzaho 2007) such schemes may be worthwhile. Similarly, seasonal migrant labour schemes, as have recently been discussed in Australia and implemented in 2007 in New Zealand, have the potential to relieve labour market pressures and when applied in post conflict situations, could be considered a potential peace building tool.

Economic reforms that lead to high levels of unemployment (even if only short term), in potential conflict areas, need to be avoided. Once conflict has started the issue of outside intervention arises. Such interventions are never easy and should only be embarked upon if there is a reasonable chance of success – best exemplified by the peace keeping mission in Bougainville (Fraenkel 2006). The recent Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) is an example of an initially successful intervention that has subsequently encountered problems.[8] The success of RAMSI was because this intervention was needed and strongly supported by most Solomon Islanders (Maclellan 2006). Subsequent problems encountered by the initiative have partly reflected the unavoidable differences of peace building and development, but also an approach that has been heavy–handed, particularly in its initial phases (Maclellan 2006). Interventions can help diffuse conflict in the PICs and should occur where they are locally supported, practical and necessary. However, if they are to succeed, they need to be holistic with the scope of development, pragmatic, and enter into in partnership with recipient countries.

8 The RAMSI mission to the Solomon Islands commenced in 2003 and was initially designed to restore peace and security after several years of instability and armed conflict primarily on the islands of Guadalcanal and Malaita. The mission commenced with the support of the parliament and people of Solomon Islands. While its name suggests a regional initiative and officially, 15 countries are contributing to the initiative, RAMSI draws much funding and personnel from Australia and to a lesser extent, New Zealand. RAMSI's initial focus was on restoring stability but the mission now works considerably in areas such as governance.

Conclusion

If the average New Zealander is troubled by the problems of the Pacific as they read the world pages of their local newspaper, they can simply turn the page. Policy makers, development professionals and the people of the Pacific do not have this luxury. The problems that confront the region are real and pressing, and wishful thinking and a business as usual approach will not bring about resolution. In the absence of concrete action, there is a very real chance that many of the PICs will fail to achieve the MDGs and fail to deliver sustained human development. This chapter has highlighted mixed PIC progress on the MDGs and critically, the key challenges to the Goals being met. It has outlined the risks posed by disease, inappropriate economic policy prescriptions, poor governance, conflict, and the self interest of regional powers.

These challenges are especially pressing because they are reinforcing. For example, disease burdens can contribute to economic problems, while inappropriate economic prescriptions can lead to worsening health situations. Worse still, political power imbalances and the external imposition of economic orthodoxies mean that decisions are often taken away from Pacific Islanders. Even where good policies are implemented, poor governance can lead to their failure. Within many of the challenges, gender – all too inadequately dealt with by the MDGs – is a critical cross cutting issue. From neoliberalism to HIV/AIDS the burdens of the problems facing the PICs will fall hardest on women.

If these challenges are not addressed, the worse scenario is conflict, as already painfully realized in several PICs. The histories of the Bougainville and Solomon Islands conflicts reiterate how destructive conflict is to both development and human wellbeing. Even for those who choose to ignore measures such as the MDGs, the rise in conflict in the Pacific over the last two decades should serve as a wake up call: action needs to be taken.

The challenges facing the Pacific may be significant and the causes for concern real but they are not insurmountable. In most instances they could potentially be overcome through the adoption of the solutions we have described. If the regional powers were to act to minimize the destabilizing actions of their business interests, this would help reduce corruption, environmental degradation and the risk of conflict. Increased and improved ODA could help the attainment of education and health goals as well as strengthening civil society. An approach to trade agreements and economic policy that moves from neoliberalism to pragmatism could provide crucial development space. A similarly pragmatic approach to issues of governance and conflict – which also pays attention to gender issues – will enhance development work. None of these solutions are particularly radical; all that would be required to put them in place would be for governments involved to be guided by the principal encapsulated by MDG 8: a partnership for development.

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